

Leader's Report

Cllr Cammy Day



May 2024

The numbers are adding up

Painting a picture of a city bouncing back to health, the latest findings from [Edinburgh by Numbers](#) provide much to be positive about. The 17th annual edition of this much-valued report draws together findings from sources around the UK to provide a comprehensive statistical snapshot of the Capital.

Not only does it reveal that record levels of Edinburgh residents are saying they feel positive and satisfied with life in the Capital, the numbers suggest this positive outlook extends to the health of our environment and economy too. We have the highest percentage of residents who consider the climate emergency to be 'urgent' and we are walking and cycling more, especially for shorter journeys, while holding some of the highest satisfaction rates for public transport in the country.

Meanwhile, more new businesses are opening and major new investment is being drawn to the city, which is good news for footfall. Just look to the hotels, restaurants and retailers being drawn to Princes Street and across the city centre, and the queue of eager shoppers snaking around the block for the [opening of Japanese retailer Uniqlo](#) last week.

Overall, there is a lot to feel good about from this year's results but there are also some statistics that demand our attention. Despite our city's success, poverty remains an issue and population growth will place yet more pressure on our core services and infrastructure – making it more vital than ever that we stay true to our priorities of getting the basics right and tackling inequality and climate change.

Leading on climate

I'm sure many of you will have shared in my disappointment at the Scottish Government's decision to scrap their target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2030 – the consequences of which are playing out in ways they couldn't possibly have imagined.

The climate crisis isn't going away – temperatures are rising and the clock is ticking. The impacts of climate change are already being felt in the city and a lack of action now will only make it harder and more costly to deal with in years to come. That's why this announcement won't make climate action any less of a priority for us.

Last year saw us make good progress against our climate goals, ranked best in Scotland for climate action by Climate Emergency UK and recognised by Carbon Disclosure Project as one of 120 cities in the world to lead the way on climate action.

We continue to make progress on the [£1.3bn transformation of Granton Waterfront](#) into Europe's first net-zero coastal town, complete with 3,500 new, sustainable homes. We know how important effective public transport is and, following the successful completion of Trams to Newhaven, we'll shortly begin consulting on how best to expand the network to Granton, the BioQuarter and beyond.

We've published a [major package of proposals](#) for the way we move people and goods around the city together with our new circulation plan, [Our Future Streets](#), and are [consulting on our draft Climate Ready Edinburgh strategy](#), which will help us adapt to our changing climate.

This work will complement significant investment in active travel routes too, including the recent completion of both the [City Centre West to East Link](#) and the Roseburn to Union Canal route, transforming public spaces and bringing disused areas back into community use.

Meanwhile, we've just launched a [12-week consultation](#) on exciting new proposals to improve [Dalry](#) and make it greener, healthier and more vibrant and, with the [introduction of our LEZ](#) from 1 June, we can look forward to improved air quality in the city centre and further afield.

But we can't do this alone. Scotland's public – and private – bodies have a huge role to play in delivering net zero. Our success depends upon collective effort and participation across society, but it also depends on sustainable funding and we need an urgent and honest conversation with the Scottish Government about how we make these projects stack up.

Map out what matters to you

As the lowest funded council in Scotland, it's no secret that we continue to face high and growing demand for services in Edinburgh, and that this demand is exceeding the funding that's now available.

Be it continuing to improve our roads, parks and greenspaces, supporting our schools, addressing poverty and homelessness, or working towards tackling our climate crisis, now more than ever, we need to plan so that we can continue to invest in our communities.

After setting a council budget that invests millions of pounds this year into protecting and improving vital frontline services, we want to continue 'getting the basics right' and plan for our future, and this means understanding what's important to residents in their own communities.

We've just [launched a public consultation ahead of next year's budget](#). Please let us know your views on our services, and how we should prioritise them, by [completing our online budget survey](#).

Record support for fairer pay

Edinburgh is proudly [leading the Living Wage movement](#), and only last month we reached a record number of Living Wage employers based in the city.

A record 117 organisations showed their commitment by accrediting as Living Wage employers in 2023/24. That means we now have 720 Edinburgh employers voluntarily committing to paying their employees a wage based on the cost of living that enables them to meet their everyday needs.

We all know that the ongoing cost-of-living crisis means that tackling in-work poverty has never been more vital and I'm delighted that, this week, our partners [Lothian Buses became the latest business to be accredited as a Living Wage employer](#).

Living Wage Scotland has just entered its tenth year of working to promote fair pay and now boasts 3,500 accredited employers nationwide – a great milestone in our collective efforts to address low pay and insecure work, and tackle poverty once and for all.

Celebrating our colleagues

I'm immensely proud of our many council teams across the city who work tirelessly to provide vital services to our residents – and so I've enjoyed getting out and about and meeting some of them face to face, giving me a better understanding of their work and the challenges they face day to day.

My recent 'back to the floor' visits have included visits to the housing property team in the north of the city, Gracemount and Broughton High Schools, our teams in Corporate Services and shadowing a care at home colleague in Moredun.

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to visit the new Corporate Parenting Hub at Leith Street, which provides space and support for care-experienced young people. I was blown away by the work that's been done to get the building ready for use, including design input from young people, and the number of different services on offer in one dedicated space is truly impressive.

I've also been pleased to resume my double act with the Chief Executive for another series of 'Celebrating You' events for colleagues from across our services – an opportunity to discuss our highlights from 2023 and look forward to the year ahead and beyond. We both very much enjoy the sessions and listening to colleagues' views and suggestions on how we can improve our services.

Of course, much of our work across the city involves our partners, often in the most challenging of circumstances. The joint response to recent incidents at Anchorfield, with the urgent evacuation of residents from their homes, and the serious fire at Breadalbane Street, showed public service at its best and I was delighted to join the Chief Executive in recognising the commitment and bravery of police, fire and council colleagues at a special event at the City Chambers last month.

Speaking of heroes, I also want to pay tribute to the team at the EICC whose quick thinking and calm action saved the life of a man who had suffered a cardiac arrest during an event in March. It's a timely reminder to us all to do, or refresh, our CPR training – we all have it in us to save a life.

A city where history and modern life meet

This year we're marking our Capital city's 900th anniversary and celebrating the rich history that makes Edinburgh the fantastic place it is today.

From commerce to conflict and from industry to ideas, it's clear that 'Scotia's Darling Seat' has many important stories to tell and, with the full programme launching in July, I can't wait to see what Edinburgh 900 will bring.

Last week we announced the [opening of the Edinburgh 900 Community Fund](#), which will allow residents and community groups to make their mark on this momentous anniversary for our city. There's also a Civic Fund for our cultural and heritage organisations to explore our collective past.

Please visit the website to [find out more about the programme and how to apply for funding](#).

'A centre for all'

I'd like to welcome the great news that the Oxgangs Neighbourhood Centre has been awarded £150,000 by The National Lottery Community Fund in Scotland.

The centre has a long history of fantastic support in the local area and I'm incredibly proud of the selfless work undertaken by the staff and volunteers, which reflects the very best of our communities.

The additional funding will enable them to provide a range of activities, events and initiatives for people living in the Oxgangs area which I'm sure will be a hugely welcome boost to everyone in the local community.

Winter wonderland

Our world-famous winter festivals contribute significantly to the enjoyment and wellbeing of our residents, providing activities for all ages and incomes to enjoy during the festive season. They also bring huge economic benefit for the city and for Scotland as a whole, supporting jobs in the tourism, hospitality and leisure sectors, amongst others.

I was pleased then that councillors [unanimously agreed to award the contract](#) for the delivery of festivals over the next three years, bringing much-needed stability and security to this key part of our events calendar.

The winning bidders, Unique Assembly, bring decades of experience in delivering major events, including our own, and I'm truly excited to see our winter festivals continue to grow and develop in the years ahead.

Farewell Professor Higgs

I want to finish by paying tribute to Professor Peter Higgs who sadly passed away last month. Professor Higgs is best known for predicting the existence of a particle that came to bear his name – the Higgs boson – while a researcher at the University of Edinburgh in 1964.

Edinburgh was his adopted home, and he frequently spoke of his love for the Capital. His groundbreaking work, and the international acclaim it brought to him, and to the city, led to him receiving the [Edinburgh Award](#) in 2011 before being awarded the Nobel Prize with Francois Englert in 2013.

His pioneering work has motivated thousands of scientists, and I have no doubt his legacy will continue to inspire many more generations to come.

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